Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General says human rights violations must be denounced on a case-by-case basis wherever they occur.

* Third round of oil-for-food talks with Iraq to begin in New York next month.

* Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination concludes 48th session examining measures by some countries to combat discrimination.

* UNICEF says it will continue concentrating on four areas of pressing need in Africa.

* Secretary-General expresses satisfaction at successful completion of electoral process in Sierra Leone.

* In former Yugoslavia, there are reports of continued arson in Grbavica on the eve of its transfer to Federation control.

* Japan announces voluntary contribution of $3.5 million for UNRWA projects.

* There is need for government leadership to counter the stereotyping of women, Commission on the Status of Women is told.

* International Court of Justice issues order on case between Cameroon and Nigeria.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has called for the creation of a true human rights diplomacy. In a statement to the opening of the 52nd session of the Human Rights Commission, the Secretary-General said that in defending human rights, violations must be denounced on a case-by-case basis wherever they occur. He said this human rights diplomacy appears clearly, today, in the mandate entrusted in recent years to the peacekeeping forces.

Dr. Boutros-Ghali pointed to most of the major operations, specifically those conducted in El Salvador, Mozambique or in Cambodia, noting that they included protection of human rights and of the population in the mission of the "Blue Helmets". Thus, the Secretary-General added, the link between peace and human

rights is clearly established by the facts, as the rights of the human person will be guaranteed first and foremost by restoring peace. He said this diplomacy is also evident in the international action of the United Nations in favour of development.

The Human Rights Commission today began its fifty-second session, scheduled for six weeks, at Geneva. The state of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the world is the focus of the session and the provisional agenda deals with questions such as human rights violations in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine, on the Papua New Guinea Island of Bougainvillea, in Cuba, southern Lebanon and western Bekaa, Iran, Zaire, Equatorial Guinea, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, the territory of the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, East Timor, and Cyprus.

The Commission's mandate allows it to examine the whole spectrum of human rights, be they civil, political, economic, social or cultural. This year, the Commission will again deal with the issues of racial and religious discrimination.

The Commission was established in 1946 by the Economic and Social Council. It has been authorized, since 1990, to meet exceptionally between regular sessions to consider particularly grave human rights situations, provided that a majority of its 53 members so agree.

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Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali has been in contact with Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and has decided that a third round of oil-for-food talks will begin in New York on 8 April, it was announced today in Geneva. The Spokeswoman for the Secretary-General in Europe, Therese Gastaut said the Secretary-General was very concerned by the suffering of the Iraqi population. The Secretary-General attached very great importance to the application of Security Council resolution 986 which would allow a controlled resumption of Iraqi oil sales for humanitarian purposes.

The UN Security Council imposed sanctions on Iraq following the expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1990.

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The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has wound up its 48th session during which it examined measures taken by a number of countries to combat discrimination. During its 3-week session, the Committee also studied information about the implementation of the Convention in States whose regular reports are overdue, and looked at countries listed under its early warning and urgent procedures mechanism. Within the framework of that mechanism, the Committee established a working group to contribute to a future constitutional conference in Rwanda, which would be a step towards establishing a lasting peace in that country. Concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Committee decided to institute a process of consultation with that Government to determine how its good offices could be drawn upon in efforts to promote understanding between races and ethnic groups there.

The Russian Federation was taken off the list of countries under the early warning and urgent procedures mechanism, as the situation there was examined during this session through the regular reporting process. Mexico and Algeria were also taken off the list.

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The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), says its contribution to the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa will be concentrated in four areas of pressing need. Executive Director Carol Bellamy says UNICEF will continue to work to revitalize health systems that are community-based and provide universal access to primary health care.

UNICEF will also help to ensure that all children -particularly girls- have access to higher quality basic education, and that parents and communities become more involved in their children's education. Thirdly, Ms. Bellamy said UNICEF will continue to extend access to safe water supply, adequate sanitation and hygiene, through low-cost, community-run systems and fourth, the Agency will promote conflict prevention, protection and rehabilitation for the 20 million African children caught in war or living in post-conflict situations.

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The Interim National Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone has announced the results of the second round of presidential elections held last Friday, according to UN Spokesman Sylvanna Foa. The Secretary-General has noted with satisfaction that the electoral process in Sierra Leone has been completed successfully and he sends his congratulations to President-elect Ahmad Tejan Kabbah on his election, she said. Mr. Kabbah won nearly 60 per cent of the votes.

The Secretary-General also congratulated the people and the political parties of Sierra Leone for the dignity, maturity and determination with which they exercised their democratic rights in the midst of difficult circumstances. He commended the National Provisional Ruling Council and its Chairman Brigadier-General Julius Bio for their commitment to the processes of democratization and peace, she said.

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In the former Yugoslavia, Grbavica is to be transferred to Bosnian Federation control Tuesday. There are reports that at least half a dozen houses were on fire in Grbavica, according to a UN Spokesman. On Saturday, 25 fires were set and three cases of rape were reported. The Federation fire brigade was escorted in by the Implementation Force (IFOR), to extinguish some of the fires. UN Spokesman Sylvanna Foa says however, after some grenades were thrown in the direction of both IFOR and International Police Task Force (IPTF) vehicles, the fire brigades stopped coming. On Sunday, IFOR arrested 12 arsonists and handed them over to the Bosnian Serb police who immediately let them go. Most of the Serb police have already left the area.

There are 91 IPTF police monitors now deployed to oversee the 100 Federation police who are due to come in tomorrow. IFOR has a large presence in the area. There is very little food available and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has begun distributing bread under the protection of IFOR and IPTF. UNHCR has also established a safe house to accommodate those who need a place to stay. A lot of the older people are afraid to stay in their buildings. They are afraid somebody would come and set the building on fire while they're asleep, the spokesman said.

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The Government of Japan has announced a voluntary contribution of US $3.5 million for projects under the Peace Implementation Plan in Lebanon and Jordan run by the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA). The emergency contribution will be used for hospitalization services in Lebanon for 1996/97; the provision of medical supplies in Lebanon; for shelter and repair reconstruction in Jordan and also for the construction and maintenance of pathways and drains in Jordan.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Peter Hansen has called the contribution "another demonstration of Japan's generosity and friendship to the Palestinian people and its strong commitment to the Middle East peace process".

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The Commission on the Status of Women has been told that government leadership is needed to counter the stereotyping of women and violence in the mass media. Several speakers stressed that the best way to encourage a more realistic representation of women's lives was through a dialogue with media owners and voluntary self-regulation by the industry. However, some representatives said that the increasing globalization and competitive nature of the media prevented governments from effectively regulating internationally broadcast programmes.

The Republic of Korea drew attention to rapid technological developments in the media which has led to gender stereotypes being perpetuated on a global scale by a handful of transnational corporations. The comments came as the Commission on the Status of Women was holding a dialogue among governments on women and the media as part of its follow-up to the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

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The International Court of Justice has issued an Order indicating provisional measures in the case concerning land and maritime boundaries between Cameroon and Nigeria.

The Order indicates that both parties should ensure no military action prejudicial to the rights of other; observe the relevant agreement reached; lend every assistance to the proposed United Nations fact-finding mission; and conserve evidence relevant to the present case.

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